

Behind O-Line, Canton runs over Northville

By Evan Paputa



Photos by Michael Vasilnek/The D Zone



For Canton to rush for 466 yards and not throw a pass all night, the offensive line must have been a success. That might be the understatement of the year as the Chiefs outlasted Northville, 42-27, to win the Kensington Conference championship for the first time since 2010.

Canton offensive linemen Lou Baechler, David Gunnis, Jake Warner, Max Mulvaney, Michael Maes, Patrick Lenczewski, and Brennon

Pelland paved way for running backs Reid McDonnell, Julian Thornton, and Markus Sanders to cruise down the field all night long.

“(Our success) it is our offensive line. They dominated tonight, they were opening big holes all night. They made it so easy for us backs to run,” McDonnell (24 carries, 147 yards, and two touchdowns) said.

Canton (7-2) came out with their foot on the gas pedal from the opening kickoff and built a 28-6 lead midway through the third quarter.

Northville (7-2) stormed back to cut the lead to 35-27 with ten minutes left in the fourth quarter, but a steady dose of the Canton running game iced the game.

With the game slipping away, Northville coach Matt Ladach dug deep into the playbook and seemingly emptied it. The Mustangs comeback was jolted by Anthony Abbott II who scored consecutive touchdowns thrown by Jack Burke, from 80 and 19 yards, respectively.

“That’s the problem. You get up by three (touchdowns) on these guys and now he (Ladach) brings out the tackle box and it was just a big-time fishing trip; I mean different formations, different stuff we haven’t seen. It’s just, we were at their mercy. They just kept on chipping back,” Canton head coach Tim Baechler said.



In the end, it was the Canton defense that stood tall when needed. Trailing 42-27 with 3:20 remaining in the game, the Chiefs rallied for four consecutive stops to get the ball back and close the game.

Burke tried to get the ball to Abbott on second and third downs, but Canton cornerback Steven Walker battled to keep the ball out of Abbott's hands. On fourth down, Burke's screen pass to Nicholas Prystash was completed, but blown up behind the line of scrimmage for a loss of a yard by Thornton.

Thornton attributed the coaching staff for preparing the defense for the second half pressure situation when they needed to get a stop.

"It was our coaches. They watch film all day. They do way more than anybody will ever know. They deserve more credit than I do right now," Thornton said.

It was very meaningful to Baechler and his players to bring the Kensington Conference trophy back to Canton for the first time since 2010.

“We haven’t won a league championship in a while, I like winning it. And my son (Lou) is on this team and he had a hell of a game on both sides of the ball, I’m proud of him,” Baechler said.

“It feels great, it is awesome,” McDonnell said.

“This is exciting. We have been working for coach Ferras (Isa) and coach Baechler. It is a big accomplishment and big win,” Thornton said.



With Selection Sunday less than 48 hours away, the Chiefs and Mustangs’ playoff opponents have not been determined yet.

Sanders and Thornton each scored two touchdowns and rushed for 196 and 98 yards, respectively.